

SLANGHOEK ROUTE GUIDE

A full-page photograph of a person rappelling down a massive, dark rock overhang. The person is silhouetted against a clear blue sky. Two ropes are visible, extending from the top left towards the person. The rock face is textured and layered. In the background, a vast valley with winding roads and distant mountains is visible under a clear sky.

Richard Halsey

Version: 30 August 2021

Please note: the route descriptions (RDs) and topos are complete, but the logistics section is still in progress.

The access arrangements for walking into the base of the cliff that are found in various earlier route descriptions for *Private Universe* are no longer correct, and a suitable arrangement with landowners has not been sorted out. This guide will be updated as details become available.

Access from the top will require being or going with a Mountain Club of South Africa member. Furthermore, it is expected that Bainskloof Pass roadworks will continue until December 2021, and this also affects access and requires getting the permission from the relevant authorities.

Disclaimer:

The usual – climbing is potentially dangerous, and the author of this guidebook accepts no responsibility whatsoever for any injuries or death that result from using this guidebook.

Slanghoek is an awesome place, but it is big and steep, so you need to have your sh*t together and your systems dialed to avoid having an epic. It is not for sissies but makes for great memories.

Cover: Abseiling over the roof above *Meteor* to reach the Private Bivy.
Photo by Garreth Bird.

Photo credits

Photos are credited with initials in the bottom right corner: David Davies (DD), Franz Walter (FW), Garreth Bird (GB), Hilton Davies (HD), Richard Halsey (RH), Sam Nightingale (SN), Teodor Iliev (TI).

Those without credited initials are from the Hilton Davies Collection.

INTRODUCTION

The First Ascent of South Africa's Biggest Wall – by Hilton Davies

In the late 1970s the great South African climber Dave Cheesmond had written about the three great and unclimbed amphitheatres of the Cape – Klein Winterhoek Amphitheatre, Upper Milner Amphitheatre and Slanghoek Amphitheatre. Dave was a climbing god to the whole world (well, about twenty of us) and my teenage brothers - David and John - and I were captivated.

Brother David and I had failed in making the first ascent of Klein Winterhoek Amphitheatre in 1980. In a stupendous heatwave we had packed up our nuts, hexes and slings, high up at the great roofs and retreated to await milder conditions and the invention of cams.

The enormous overhanging amphitheatre of Slanghoek – the biggest in South Africa - had repelled some very good teams. Tony Dick, Jonathan Fisher and others had all turned at the same highpoint six pitches up. In May 1998 David, Alan Ross and I had our first crack at the daunting wall. We got to the same highpoint and began to understand the magnitude and the dread.

In 2002 Matthew Sim joined David and I in our quest to get up this huge and improbable cliff that appeared intent on collapsing into its undercut belly. We began by hacking a way through the dense forest and constructing a platform at the base of the wall for a campsite. We pitched a tent and it remained there for a year. Many of our great friends helped by ferrying in loads of gear and supplies.

2002 was a busy year for all of us. David's business – Mountain Mail Order – kept him on the trot. Matthew and I had our own demands. None of us could afford a spell away, and so the big project was chewed in two- and three-day weekend trips. We would speed out to Slanghoek, charge up the huge approach, jumar fixed ropes, climb new ground, place some bolts and fix new ropes, descend, go home, repeat. It was hard and we had many incidents and accidents. Over the course of the year we made 13 trips to get the job done.

Somewhere along the line Matthew had broken a leg on another mountain and was out for a bit. David and I did a trip where about 15 pitches up we got ourselves into deep space trouble. We had overhanging loose rock, poor gear, and a belay stance that consisted of a handjam. A series of scary manoeuvres and then some tricky abseils off a wire nut here and there got us back to sanity.

Even though there are not that many lead bolts (excluding belay bolts), placing them while on lead using the heavy Hilti TE6 drill was no easy thing. Sometimes a whole trip only achieved one pitch. But that is not how we started. We began with a hand drill kit where the drill bit is a cylinder with teeth, and it is part of the final bolt placement. It was a nightmare. The red and orange Slanghoek rock is immensely hard and one hand-drilled bolt would take a couple of hours of hammering. The purchase of the TE6 was critical to getting up the wall.



By late 2002 I was really taken with the band Crowded House, and I had one of their songs on my mind one day late in 2002 when we lay in the campsite at the base of the wall and about to do the first ascent of our mammoth project in the morning. The view while lying on my back was of the overhanging orange walls encircling us and stretching up to the fading atmosphere and emerging galactic night sky. The song was *Private Universe*.

Fifteen years later:

One of the top alpinists in the world is a wonderful German woman named Ines Papert. She reached out to me in 2016 and over time we became firm friends. In 2017 Ines was keen to do something in South Africa and I pointed her to Slanghoek. She and her team of professional climbers – Luka Lindič, Paul McSorley and Seppi Pfnür arrived and climbed *A Private Universe*. They loved the route and were enthralled with the wall. The climbing team and filmmaker Franz Walter spent an on-off month in my home between winter storms and climbed their new route to the right of *Private*. On their last evening before flying out they quizzed me on names. Ines was in love with the ruby-coloured rock and kept on coming back to that. One of my names was “Supernova”. While Ines and team travelled home on the train from Frankfurt to Berchtesgaden, she messaged to say that *Ruby Supernova* was being released to the international press.

The Slanghoek Siege – by Richard Halsey

As it has panned out, I have spent a fair proportion of my tenure on this planet developing new climbing routes. Some of this time is spent staring at rock faces trying to figure out where the line will go. With this ingrained habit, when I climbed *Private* in 2015 with Warren Gans and Uwe Pitsch, it was obvious that there was scope for more routes. However, my overriding thought was: “F*ck, that is gonna be a lot of work”. The notion was bumped far down the to do list, where it may well have gathered dust for eons, as we are not short of low hanging fruit in the Western Cape. Fortunately, an eager instigator in the form of Sam Nightingale talked me into it, but in fairness it wasn’t actually a hard sell.

Before our pilgrimages began in 2019, access to the base of the cliff had already become difficult, so our missions were top-down. This did however present some advantages. First, Slanghoek has some excellent quality rock (especially the orange stuff), but some of it is perched, teetering or borderline levitating. Once turfed to join their brethren on the scree slope below, you have awesome pitches – but cleaning while be belayed would be dangerous. So, in addition to being safer, cleaning top-down meant we could be pretty thorough, which makes for a better end product. Second, it saved time as dead ends didn’t require retreat – just more jumaring and resetting the cords to look elsewhere. When pitches were not vertically above each other, both of us could be busy at the same time. The top-down sessions also meant we could both rehearse pitches to make sure bolts were optimally placed.

The downside of our approach was the amount of kit required. An entire rack was used for rigging. As the amphitheatre is not shy on edges that could damage fixed lines, I insisted on backup ropes. At its zenith our rope tally was 748m, weighing about 48kg. The exposure on some of the jumars was immense, so the second string was most comforting, but not comfortable to carry in.

It was hard work, and we would return from trips utterly exhausted and filthy in a way that one shower can’t fix. ‘Permadiirt’ is a real thing. But living on the side of the cliff was as rewarding as it was immersive, and as beautiful as it was intimidating. In the mornings there was often a period when hundreds of swifts were on the wing – transforming the bowl around us into a frenzy of noisy avian feeding. All of our activity stopped and we just soaked it up.

At sunset we were often still hundreds of meters below our base camp on a ledge 120m from the summit. Our headlamps got a good workout, as did we – clocking up vertical transit miles.

Standing on the opposite side of the main wall, the most obvious line was a massive series of corners through the steepest section of rock to the left of *Private*. For a while it had the working title of 'Parallel Universe' which summed up how our voyages into this space felt. Subsequent investigations revealed that many moons ago, Joe Möhle had intended to tackle this same feature, but unlike us he tried ground up, and by himself. For years after, parties on the wall had seen abandoned gear and ropes left hanging in the first corner, which is above pitch 7 of *Private*. This is where Joe had fallen, broken some gear and partially broken himself. Luckily, he could limp back to civilization.

After four siege missions, Sam and I hauled ourselves plus increasingly battered haul bags over the rim to establish *Moonshine Corner*. Compounding factors had left us far too knackered to even contemplate freeing the crux pitch on that trip. Naively we thought we would simply go pump some iron and return in short order to finish it properly. Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, a virus that shared its first name with a brand of beer was brewing up its own attack.

Having gotten into the groove, I turned my eye to the right side of the wall. Less steep and less compact, I hatched a plan for a bolt-less route to the right of *Ruby* and spent a solo trip sussing it out. Plus, the manual labour was good training for our *Moonshine* send. Then COVID hit, Sam gapped it to England and got locked out for seven months and 300m of fixed lines had a lonely winter on the cliff.

When outdoor adventures were no longer illegal, I returned for some more vertical alone time. Once my preparations were complete, Garreth Bird entered the fray as another strong and competent partner. *Red Giant* (24 PG) was born. It comes with a parental guidance rating that a few bolts would have negated, but the allure of a trad-only route won out. Plus, we hadn't brought a drill.

Now, having lugged so many toys into the wilderness, I deemed it prudent to max it out. During our *Moonshine* exploits another seed had germinated, and after many hours of nerding at a laptop, zooming in and out of recon photos, I was confident the next line I had drawn on the emerging topo would work.

This time we were a trio: Garreth and Sam were suckers for more graft, and our 'Snake Corner Masochists' WhatsApp group was abuzz with activity. After another 4 trips and over a dozen nights on the wall, the third route was complete. During this period, our dear friend Teo Illiev departed us for good, and his death was very much on our minds while we were in this special place that he too loved so much. He had burned with such brightness and energy, bringing joy to so many, that we felt *Meteor* was a fitting tribute to a great person and accomplished climber.

At this stage we all agreed that we were done with this sieging nonsense, but there was the minor issue of all the paraphernalia that needed to return home. Walking in all that way just to ferry stuff out seemed silly, so this time it was me twisting Sam's arm that a short rap-in-climb-out route was a worthwhile addition. *Voyager* (24) was the result, and shortly afterwards we completed the 18-month circle with a free ascent of *Moonshine* at grade 27. Now I am was REALLY done at Slanghoek.

Although there was this other idea

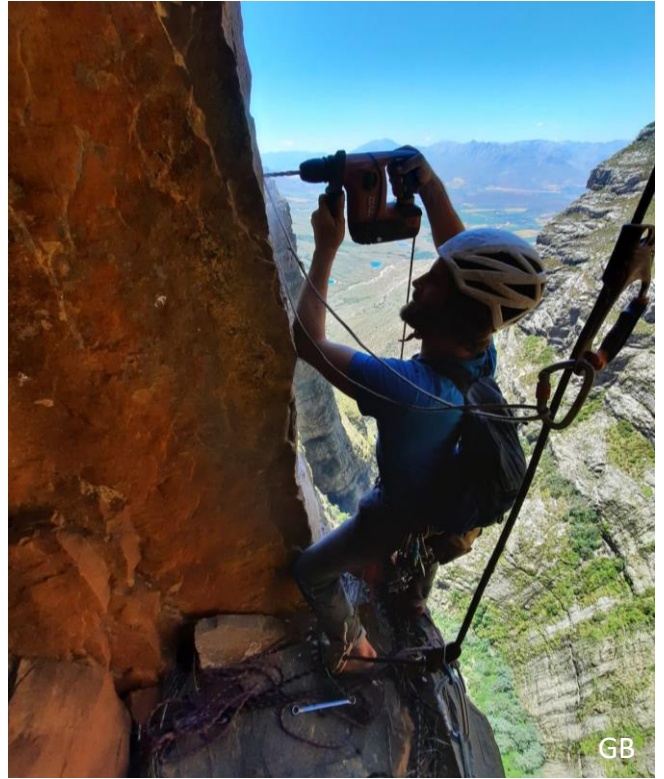
Acknowledgements

For this route guide, thanks to: Hilton Davies for his contributions, edits and photos, Tinie Versfeld for information on the first free ascent of the wall and Leonard le Roux for the descent gully illustration. We (Sam, Garreth and Richard) would like to thank the Mountain Club of South Africa for donating bolts for *Moonshine Corner* and ring hangers for the rap route. Also, thanks to Alex Bester for lending us his drill, John Halsey for lending us his 4x4 on multiple occasions for access, Michael Owen and Moritz Thilo for donating rope for fixed lines, and all others who gave their time and advice during the process.

Route development



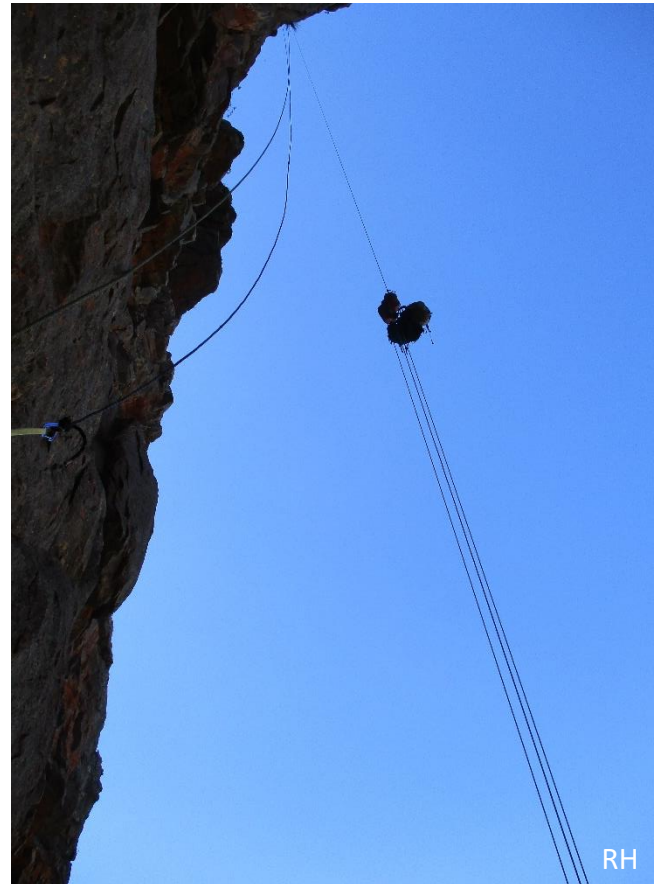
Heavy carry to base of wall 2001 – Hilton Davies, Amanda Lloyd-Sim and Matthew Sim



Sam installing anchors on *Meteor*



Birdman exploring into the abyss



Hauling the fixed lines out after the *Moonshine* preparation trips

LOGISTICS

Access and approach

1. From the bottom

As of August 2021, this access was difficult and hopefully this situation gets resolved, but in the meantime please do not try accessing from the bottom unless you have managed to make an arrangement that is 100% cleared directly with the relevant landowners.

2. From the top- either to abseil in or use the descent gulley

Access needs to be arranged with the Mountain Club of South Africa (MCSA) Cape Town section for the Springstygbeugel property. There is also a route safety form that needs to be filled in and sent to Cape Nature. Please get details from the MCSA or convenor for the property.

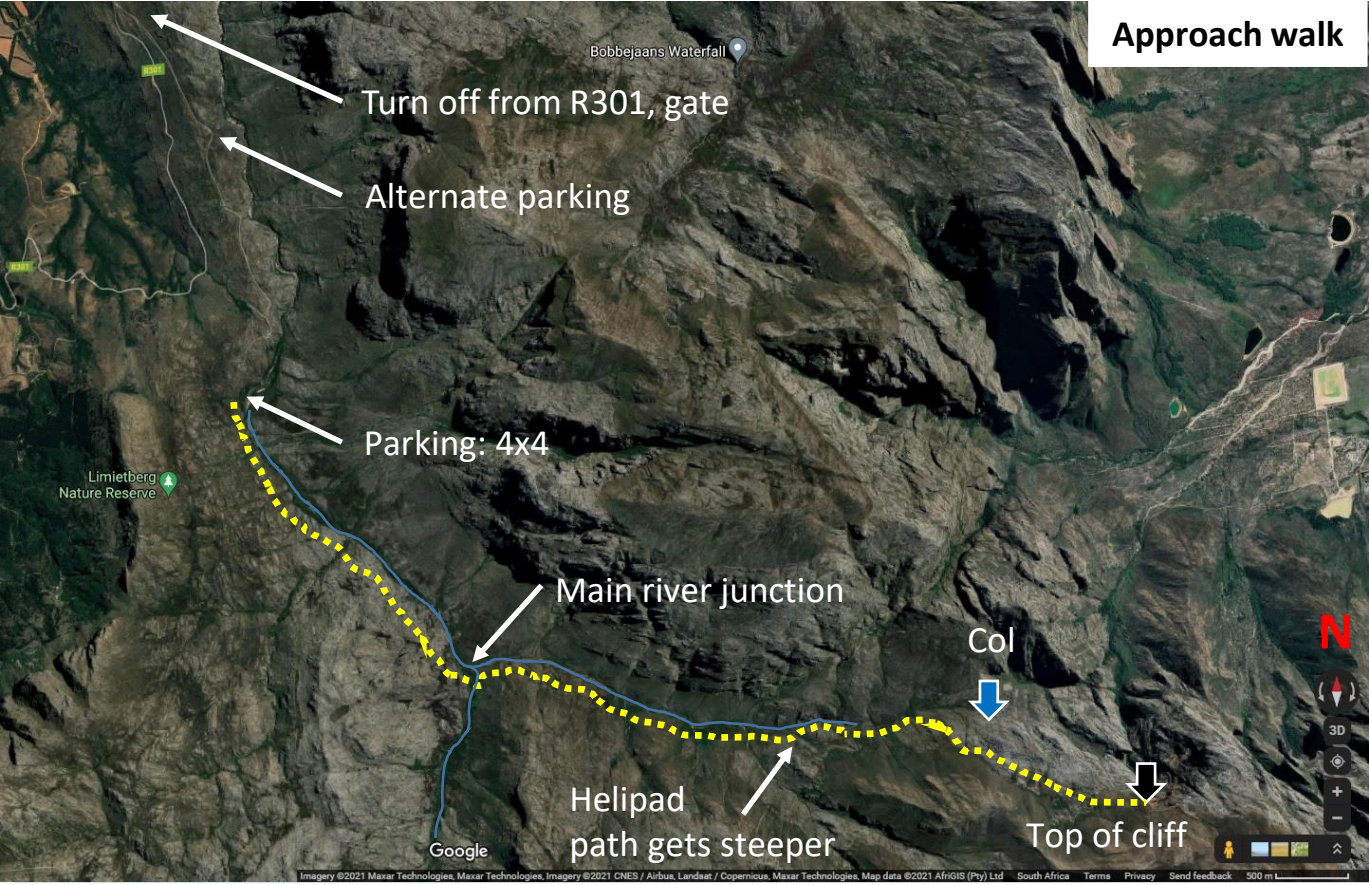
Drive up Bainskloof pass, and just before the 'Witterivier Parking' turn right on a dirt track (33°37'25.5"S 19°05'50.2"E)*. There is a gate here, and you will need to collect the key from the MCSA if you want to open the gate and drive along the dirt road (~3km to the end parking (33°39'03.0"S 19°06'25.6"E) and needs a 4x4 or high clearance if you are brave/confident. There is a parking about a third of the way near a memorial (33°37'55.7"S 19°06'17.2"E) that a 'city car' can get to if it is driven carefully. Follow the trail from the end parking (it is visible on Google Maps). There is a bridge at the first river (33°39'34.1"S 19°06'53.1"E) and you go through a second much smaller river. As you get to the third river (33°40'02.2"S 19°07'31.6"E) turn right and walk 20 or so meters for an easier place to cross. Turn left and head back to find the main path. This is near the main river junction. Follow the path, which stays right (south) of the river, crossing 3 more side rivers to a helicopter landing pad (approx. 33°40'15.3"S 19°08'59.0"E. Here the path gets a bit steeper for a while, and at a small stream (approx. 33°40'11.0"S 19°09'29.0"E) the path flattens out. It is about 2-3 hours to this point. There is cell phone reception near the top of the cliff.

*Co-ordinates based on Google Maps and not verified with a GPS.

To abseil: continue for another few minutes looking for cairns up the slope on the right. For the final section, don't stray too far left as the terrain gets rockier – try stick to the slabs. The last cliff band has a good source of water. About 1 – 1.5 hours for this section. The recommended abseil route is described after the RD for *A Private Universe*.

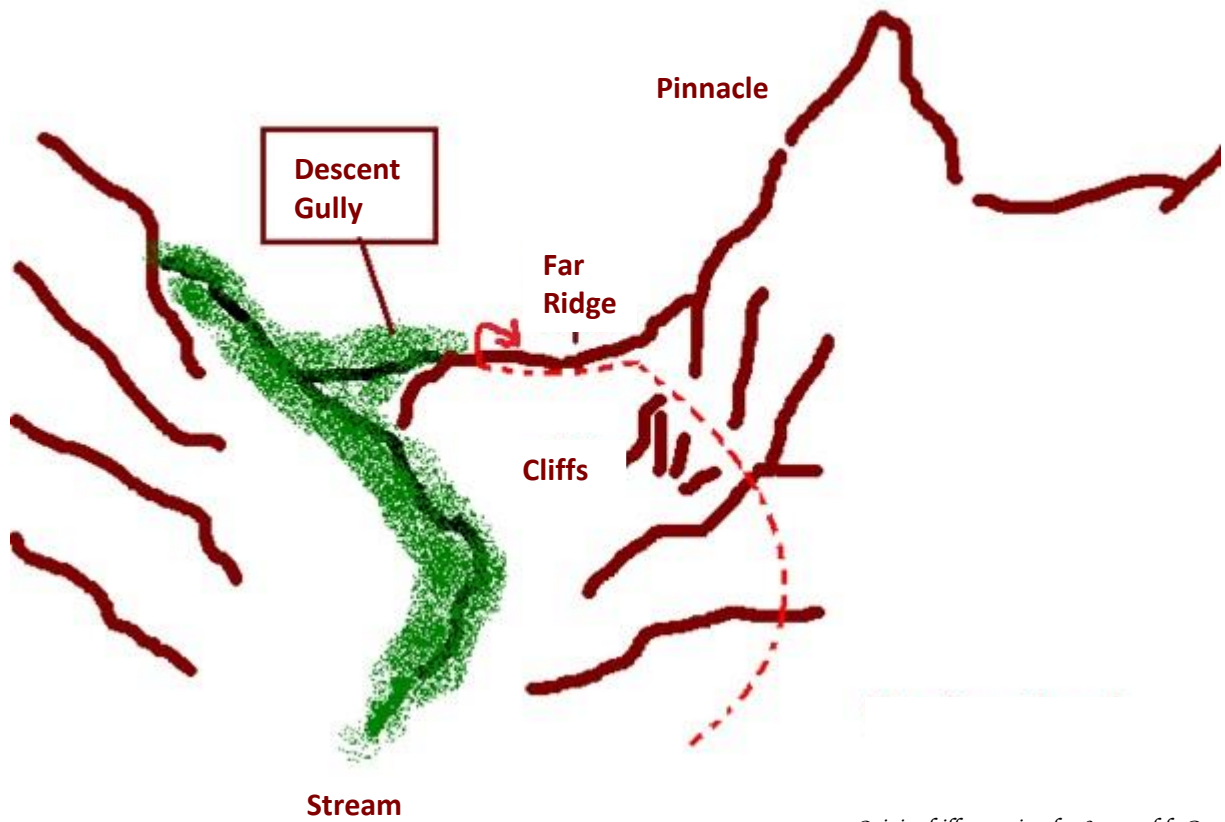
To go down descent gully: continue straight on the path towards the col with some big boulders (good campsite). Pick a line on the right-hand side of the valley below and maintaining your altitude, aim for the ridgeline in the distance with some small trees (beyond which lies the descent gulley.) Contour carefully towards the ridgeline and continue down its crest until forced over and down right into the ascent gulley. A steep and tricky slope regains the descent gorge. About 3-4 hours from col. Probably unwise to try and on-sight in the dark.





Approach walk

View from the col



Original illustration by Leonard le Roux

Approach walk

↓ Amphitheatre rim

Water

↓ Good campsite in boulders at the col

↙ To descent gully and col

↗ To top of cliff

N



2D



Climbing strategy

There are many combinations depending on how you get to the base of the cliff, how many days you are planning for your route and which descent you choose. The follow are just some considerations when planning your adventure.

- There is intermittent cell phone reception (have tested Vodacom, MTN) on the wall, better higher up. Unlikely to have reception at the base of the wall.
- If you are trying to free the route you choose it may take more days.
- Separating yourselves from your bags (either to abseil or climb back to them) saves weight and time, but comes with the risks (think through what would happen if weather changes, it gets dark, someone is injured etc).
- If abseiling in you could stash extra water on the way down.
- If you approach from the top, it is probably best to take everything with you (i.e. rather than leaving items like car/gate keys and wallets at the top of the crag) in case you have some epic and have to bail to the base and walk out to Slanghoek Valley.

A Private Universe (APU)

- Has been climbed and abseiled in a day – this requires being fit, moving fast and aiding efficiently. The big advantage is not having to haul or abseil with heavy bags.
- Most parties spend at least one night on the wall. The Private Bivy after pitch 8 is the first sleeping option, or the Long Ledge after pitch 12.
- If approaching from the bottom:
 - A common strategy is to climb and haul to the Private Bivy in one day. Either leave bags at the Private Bivy, climb and abseil back to them on second day, or climb and haul them to top of wall (if walking off).
 - The wall gets much steeper after the Private Bivy for 3 pitches, which also means the abseils in this section are complicated and require lots of directionals. This is worth bearing in mind if you are thinking it would be good to do more climbing on day 1, as the trade off is you will have more hauling to do and then also additional complicated abseils with the bags. If you are planning to haul to top of cliff and walk off then this point is mute.
- If approaching from the top and also abseiling in:
 - Firstly, the abseil is steep and complicated in places, which is compounded with heavy bags including water. So allow enough time and take care. Using your haul line to lower bags and pull them in with a tag line is worth considering, so heavy bags are not directly on you.
 - It probably makes sense to abseil to Private Bivy on day 1. The following day leave bags, abseil to base and climb back (bearing in mind the above mentioned risk of separating from bags). Continue up to Long Ledge if time allows.
- Hauling:
 - Some parties have had epics hauling the lower pitches as they are slabby and bags get caught in bushes etc. The first two pitches of *Meteor* are more direct and have haul bolts, so could be an easier option for the slabs.

Moonshine Corner and Meteor

- Same considerations as for *APU*, but as the routes are more demanding (harder pitches and less bolts) they will likely take a bit longer. Spending one night at the Private Bivy and one night at Moonshine Ledge may be advisable, particularly if attempting to free climb all the pitches.

Ruby Supernova and Red Giant

- Sleeping options are the Mega Ledge, Ruby Bivy Ledge and Red Giant Cave.
- If abseiling, some of the *Ruby* points (wires, pegs and thin tat) will definitely need backing up. *Red Giant* does not have a fixed rap route, but if you do want to abseil the route, the topo indicates what gear is good for which stances.

Descent options

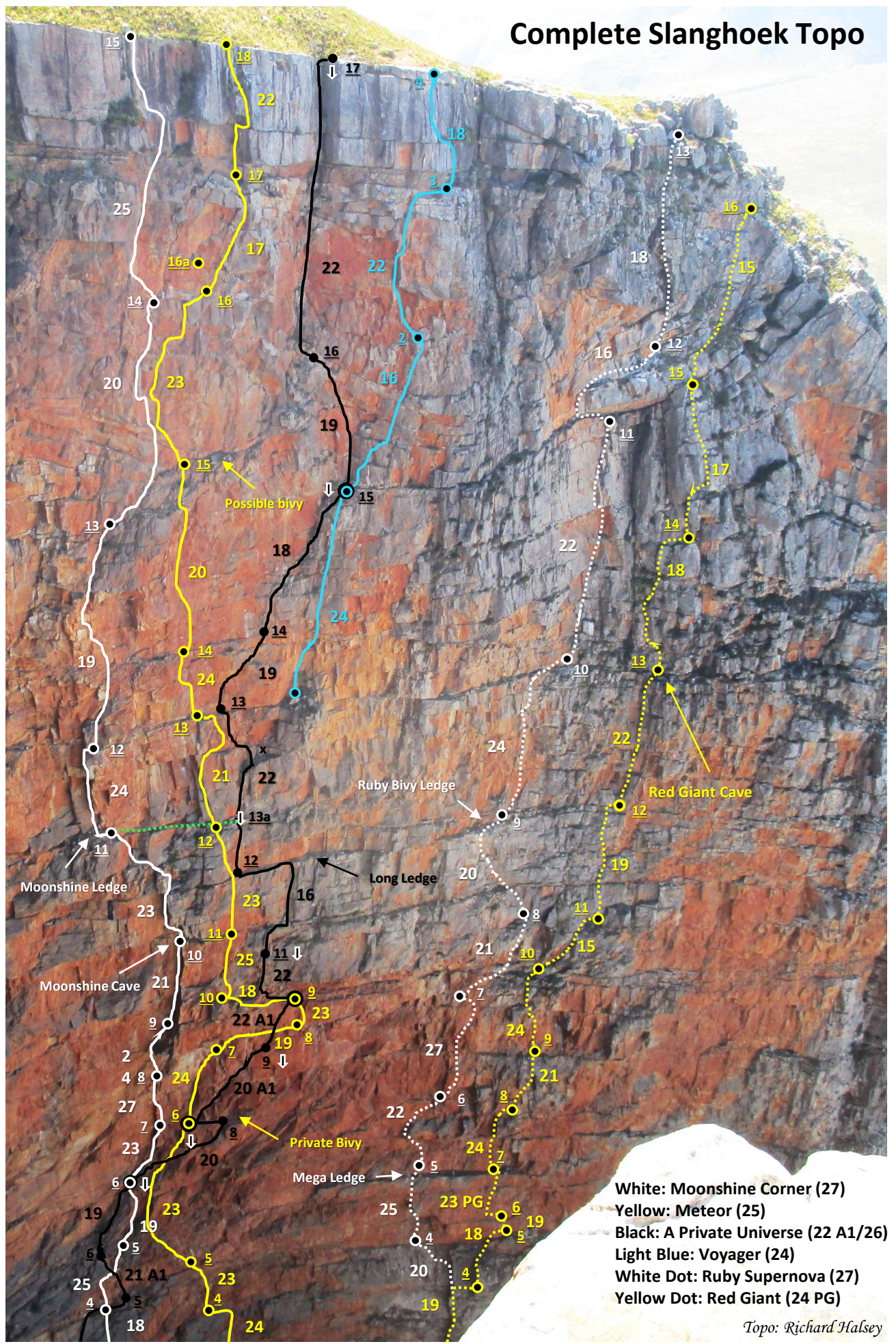
There are three options, depending on your strategy.

1. Use the recommended abseil route or the descent gully if you need to get back to the base of the wall. Both options take 4-5 hours depending on an obstacles encountered.
2. Walk out to Bainskloof Pass if you approached from the top or have a car shuffle arranged. For the walk just reverse the detailed walking instructions in the 'approach' section. In brief, from the top of the cliff head down to the right (northwest) following the slabs where possible to come out a bit left (west) of the col. Find the path heading left (west) that stays to the left of the river. Near the main river junction turn left and walk up the river coming down from the left to find a place to cross. Turn back right to rejoin the path which continues all the way back to the parking areas/Bainskloof Pass.



Exiting *Meteor* – so long, and thanks for all the fish

Complete Slanghoek Topo



Moonshine Corner (27) ***** 470m

(21, 16, 21, 18, 25, 19, 23, 27, 24, 21, 23, 24, 19, 20, 25).

An adventure in a parallel universe. This route follows a huge, prominent corner system snaking up the steepest section of the wall. It starts by taking a direct line cutting through the lower, winding pitches of *A Private Universe (APU)*. This is a mixed route: mainly traditional with 14 lead bolts over entire route. It shares 2 bolted stances on *A Private Universe (APU)* and has additional bolted stances for efficient, inline hauling.

Start: About 30m left of the *APU* pillar, by a tree and cairn below a broken, left facing recess.

1. 50m (21) Start is easy, but first good gear is fairly high up, so approach with caution. Head up a short slab to gain the broken, left facing corner. Head up and traverse ~2m right to a small platform with two wedged blocks. Up the short, left facing, hand jam corner and step right. Continue up and left to a wide V-shaped break at an overlap. Pull through this, then up and right to a narrow ledge with an old rap bolt on *APU*. Continue up ~1m left of the bolt to a rail, step right to a recess. Up another meter or two and traverse left to a double bolt anchor with ring hangers.

2. 25m (16) Head back right and up easy ground (taking care for loose rock) until able to move back left to another double bolt anchor.

3. 45m (21) Scramble up and right to gain grey face. Up straight past 2 bolts to a vague horizontal break that takes small and medium cams. Tend up and left (useful #0.5 Camalot slot en route) to join the corner system (first flake is fragile) that arcs up and right. Pull over a bulge to a sloping ledge below a wide rail (#4 Camalot useful). Step left to follow the good holds within a section of broken orange rock up and right into a narrow right facing corner. Follow this to the ledge and use the bolted anchor on *APU*.

4. 20m (18) From the anchor walk left ~7m and pull up a short, featured slab (small wire to protect move off ledge). Traverse back right to ascend the narrow, left facing corner. Stance as the grey corner ends (not higher up) as this is where gear is best.

5. 30m (25, 4B) The Shale Band. Up past a bolt to a rail. Move left and follow the crack system to a bulge. The upper section of the crack is fragile in places – take care and do not place gear behind the block. Pass two bolts in the shale to a rail. Traverse right and clip one bolt on *APU* at the lip of the roof. Establish above roof and tend up and right for ~10m to belay below an orange face.

6. 20m (19) Follow the crack system up the orange wall and near top step left and up to the bolted anchor on *APU*.

If sleeping at the Private Bivy, head up easily to the narrow roof and traverse right to finish on *Meteor* pitch 6. From the Private Bivy, one rap brings you back here to continue the next day.

7. 25m (23) Scramble right over easy terrain and up to a rail below the big corner above. Pull through a short steep section (decent cam just over scoop) on good holds and then up and right to join a finger crack running up the right wall of the corner. Step right just before crack ends and stance at a small platform (medium cams)

8. 20m (27, 5B) Climb past the bolt to a small square perch. Head steeply up past 4 bolts to exit left, and then back right to small stance on a ramp (medium cams on the right). This pitch can be climbed with a few small cams/wires, 5 quickdraws and #0.5 to #1 Camalot size cams for anchor.

9. 20m (24, 1B) Up from the stance and left past a bolt to a narrow horizontal shelf. Follow vertical slots (micro cams, small wires) to a rail under a roof. Step left and pull over onto a ramp. Follow the corner crack to a stance by the black water streaks (medium cams). Do not stance further up directly under the base of corner (where any jammed blocks in the crack would fall is dislodged).

10. 30m (21) Climb up the right wall and traverse right to the arête. Move up and then back left on face to join main corner. Follow this, tentatively passing some jammed blocks, to a bivy cave. There is a bolt for hauling at the left side and 2 bolts on the far right (around the corner) at a second sleeping spot. Above the large boulder in the cave takes #3 or #4 Camalots. Take care as the floor of the cave is a bit unstable.

11. 45m (23, 1B) From the left side of cave pass a bolt to a small shelf. Climb left under the roof (be careful of possible swifts nesting in the roof) into the left facing corner. Follow this and exit right at the top to a ledge. Up ~2m to a rail. Manage ropes carefully, and traverse left and diagonally up to sleeping ledge. There is a bolt and cam backup to belay/haul at.

12. 25m (24, 2B) The Impossible Corner. From the sleeping spot, climb the corner to the roof. Traverse right to a finger crack. Continue until forced to exit right to an airy perch.

13. 40m (19) Climb up and right over easy ground along a wide crack, then back left up the face. Stay to the right of a large, balanced block by using the thin under cling crack to the right – pull over to a sloping ledge. Head left and up before coming back right to the break in the roof with a large, wedged rock. Follow the ramp to a stance on a small ledge.

14. 35m (20, 1B) Traverse up and right for ~10m to the right side of bulging section by a bolt onto a sloping face. Up and traverse left under a large a fin shaped rock (possibly not attached to mountain) ignoring the bolt in the corner heading right which is on *Meteor*. Continue up a crack on the left side of a pillar and move right and up to a small stance at a rail. Just up and right are a few large blocks stacked on a small ledge.

15. 40m (25) The Sting. A demanding pitch requiring careful rope management. Move up and left to gain the steep, awkward corner system. At the top of the corner, where there is a small ledge on the left, stay right through a bulge and up a short black and orange face to the final slab. Mantle up and traverse 2m left. Continue up the right side of a gully to a bolted anchor on the top of the cliff.

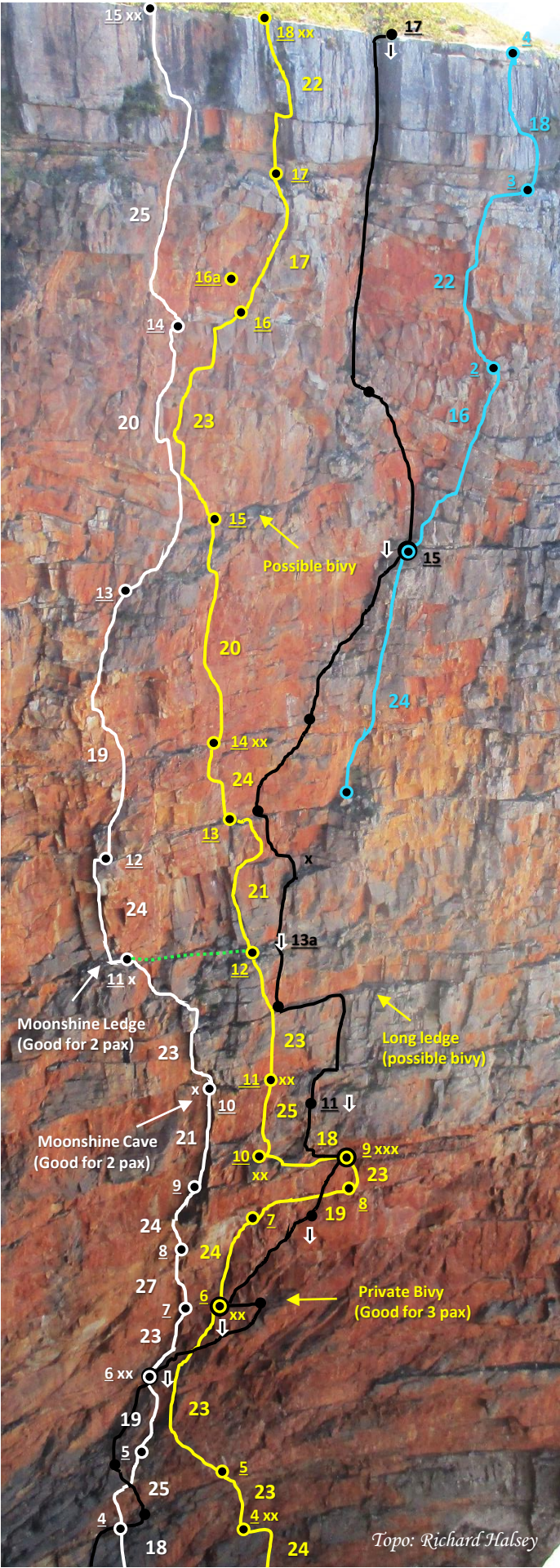
FA: Sam Nightingale and Richard Halsey (Grade 25 A1, 15-18 Feb 2020)

FFA: Sam Nightingale and Richard Halsey (Grade 27, 23-26 Apr 2021)

Notes: Gear: Suggested rack: 60m half ropes and a 60m haul line (tag line saves weight for leader). Cams – double set of cams from micro to #0.5 Camalot, doubles from #0.75 to #3 Camalot and one #4 Camalot (recommended but not essential). Standard set of wires sufficient. Hauling: See Topo for recommended haul stances. Tie off at each anchor to protect leader in case bags fall off ledge unexpectedly. If sleeping at Private Bivy, bags can be left there and hauled after pitch 9 (60m line) or at the cave (after pitch 10) if you happen to have a 70m haul line.

Joe Möhle had the idea to attempt the same corner system (pitches 7 to 12) many years before, but he chose to do so ground-up rope solo! Starting on the lower pitches of *APU*, his trip ended with a long fall in the first corner (pitch 7), injuring a leg and his lower back, resulting in ropes and gear abandoned on the cliff and a long hobble back home.

Moonshine Corner (27)
Arrows (rap route)
Meteor (25)
A Private Universe (22 A1/26)
Voyager (24)



Moonshine Corner – the name says it all



Climbing by headlight and moonlight



Excellent crack on Pitch 7



Pitch 10 – Huge open book into the cave



Pitch 12 – The Impossible Corner

Meteor (25) ***** 500m

(20, 16, 21, 24, 23, 23, 24, 19, 23, 18, 25, 23, 21, 24, 20, 23, 17, 22)

In memory of our friend Teo Iliev (1993-2021).

A sustained voyage with many excellent pitches, exposed positions and a wild finish leaning out over the entire cliff. This is a mixed route: mainly traditional with 24 lead bolts over entire route. It shares 3 bolted stances on *A Private Universe (APU)* and has additional bolted stances for efficient, inline hauling.

Start: At the large rock pillar leaning against the wall as for *APU*. The first pitch follows *APU* and then goes straight where *APU* continues right. The first pitch is described in detail as alternative breaks in the lower roof are more run-out and scary, and other parties have got lost on this section.

1. 50m (20) Up the leaning pillar and then continue up and slightly right to gain the narrow roof ~30m up. The break to aim for has a lower section of roof on the left (with a wide crack in its underside) and then another roof ~1m higher on right (see photo). At the lower roof section, rail right for ~1m – slightly grassy but can take a #4 Camelot. Pull back up and left to layback holds and pass the higher right-hand roof section on its left side. At this level, head easily up and right up for few meters, then head straight up the face to the narrow roof above (~42m above the ground). Move slightly left and then up a vertical crack below a large prominent tree. Bolted haul station to the left of the tree.

2. 35m (16) Move up and right to above the tree and then more or less straight up to top of the slabs. Single haul bolt below a rail.

3. 32m (21, 1B) Start slightly left of the anchor up the face to pass the roof on its left side. Follow the arête, often on good holds to the left, past a bolt to the final overlap. Straight up to a bolted *APU* stance.

4. 35m (24, 4B) The Pyramid. Starting slightly right, move left to the bolt and up the thin seam to a ledge. Head diagonally right along the side of the Pyramid (#4 Camelot useful) to the apex. Pull up onto the steep, blunt arête passing 3 bolts, then slightly left to a small, right-facing corner. Exit the top of corner to the left (cams at ankle height) and traverse left a few meters until able to mantle up to a ledge with double bolt anchor.

5. 15m (23, 3B) Climb up past 2 bolts to a roof above a shale band. The second bolt can either be climbed straight with a reachy move or to the right on crimps. At the roof, move left and pull through at the third bolt. Continue up ~5m to belay at a narrow ledge with a finger rail 2.5 m higher up (#0.4 to #0.5 Camelot size required).

6. 45m (23, 4B) Head up and left to the base of the arête (bolt). Pull around the arete and pass 3 more bolts, exiting right at the top of the corner. Step back left to a large left facing corner (optional stance) and then follow the weakness up and right to arrive at the bolted *APU* anchor on the far-left side of the Private Bivy (*APU* takes a lower rising traverse to the middle of the Private Bivy).

7. 28m (24, 1B) The Boulder Move. From the anchor on the far-left side of the left-hand bivy ledge, boulder past the bolt, then straight up into the corner crack to a narrow ledge (small to medium cams).

8. 23m (19) Traverse right for ~2m and then diagonally up right on easiest line to the rail below the roof. Rail right for ~10m, passing under the steep, wide crack on *APU* to an airy perch with a rail for small to medium cams. It is possible to use similar gear in the rail and to step down and right ~2m to another narrow ledge for a more comfortable stance.

- 9. 15m (23)** Start up a finger crack to the right of the perch stance and step back left to a prong above the belay. Navigate the steep recess to a rail under an overlap. Traverse left to the 3 bolt anchor on *APU*.
- 10. 20m (18)** Traverse left on a good foot ledge, under the bolts on *APU*. Continue left, stepping down a level and then back up to a left-facing groove. Pull up the wide crack and left onto the face, then traverse a few meters further left to a bolted stance.
- 11. 20m (25, 3B)** Step right and then up past two bolts to a ledge. Climb the steep, fierce crack to a bolted stance above a small ledge (this is the right end of the Moonshine Cave – possible bivy).
- 12. 35m (23, 2B)** Tricky moves off the anchor past a bolt and small cam placement to a rail. Carry on up and then slightly left to the 3 bolt stance on *APU* (possible bivy on the Long Ledge to the right). Tend up and left (*APU* goes right) passing one more bolt to a big ledge with good rail for finger size cams. The Moonshine Ledge can be accessed by traversing ~25m left – lower out and haul bags if sleeping there.
- 13. 25m (21)** This pitch wanders a bit and requires careful rope management (see photo). Directly above stance is a grey, left facing corner. Climb this until you find a wide gash that breaks off to the right. Follow this to a rail. Traverse right a few meters to some good vertical slots. Pull up to a rail, then traverse right again to an orange bulge. Up to a rail (*APU* bolts even further right), then traverse back left to a right facing recess. Finish up this to a broad ledge. Here, *APU* bolts go up and right, but move left and stance (finger to medium size cams) below the steep bolted face.
- 14. 16m (24, 4B) The Sport Pitch.** Fly up the overhanging face past 4 bolts to a rail at the roof. Traverse left until able to pull up onto easier ground. Step right and up to a ledge (bolted anchor). Can be climbed with 4 quickdraws and a handful of finger to medium sized cams.
- 15. 35m (20)** A stellar pitch of moderate climbing. Start just right of the anchor and tend diagonally right for ~6 m, then tend left across the face aiming for the narrowest break through the overlap (with a semi-attached chock stone). Head straight up towards a small triangular roof, then move left to exit left via a vague diagonal under a slanted roof (see photo). Stance at good horizontal rail ~5m higher at a sloping shelf. To the right on the ledge is another possible bivy.
- 16. 30m (23, 2B).** Up left to a mantle by a bolt, then up and further left until reaching the large fin shaped rock (*Moonshine* traverses under it). Step right into the left facing corner with one bolt. Exit onto a sloping shelf and traverse right to a grey left facing recess. Up to the roof and rail right. Either stance at the first narrow ledge (more in line with next pitch) or slightly up and left on a bigger grassy ledge.
- 17. 18m (17)** Follow the rising weakness on the right with a steep finish onto a grassy ledge.
- 18. 20m (22) The Space Cowboy.** Start up the corner to reach the roof. Rail ~5m right (#4 Camalot useful) and pull up onto the enormous rib to ride the bronco and the end of the universe. Dismount and finish up and slightly left to find a bolted anchor over the lip.

FA: Richard Halsey, Garrreth Bird, Sam Nightingale (17-19 Feb 2021)

Notes: Gear: Suggested rack: 60m half ropes and 60m haul line (tag line saves weight for leader). Triple set of cams from micro to #0.5 Camalot, doubles from #0.75 to #3 Camalot and one #4 Camalot. Standard set of wires sufficient. Hauling: See topo for recommendations. Tie off at each anchor to protect leader in case bags fall off ledges. Fortunately it is possible to do one haul through the Dog Leg (pitches 7 to 10): a 60m line on the bags left at the Private Bivy can be tied tight at anchor 9 and the leader can trail the remainder of the haul line across the traverse and it *just* reaches anchor 10.



Voyager (24) * 110m**

(24, 16, 22, 18)

A rap in and climb out route. Two money pitches and two linkers. A nice day out for those wanting to experience the Slanghoek exposure, without the big wall logistics.

Start: Do the first long 60m rap on *APU*. From anchor 15 (as per abseil topo), go straight down for 35m to ledge with some large blocks and a large tree.

1. 36m (24, 1B) Start left of the tree, over some blocky ground to a thin seam and bolt. Straight up the step recess to a rail, traverse right ~2m and pull steeply over the roof. Straight up to a hard move (crux) before easier ground continues directly up to a finger crack just before the bolted anchor.

2. 30m (16) Tend up and right keeping just right of the series of steep orange overlaps. Up the blocky recess to belay on the left side of a giant, grey, disc shaped boulder.

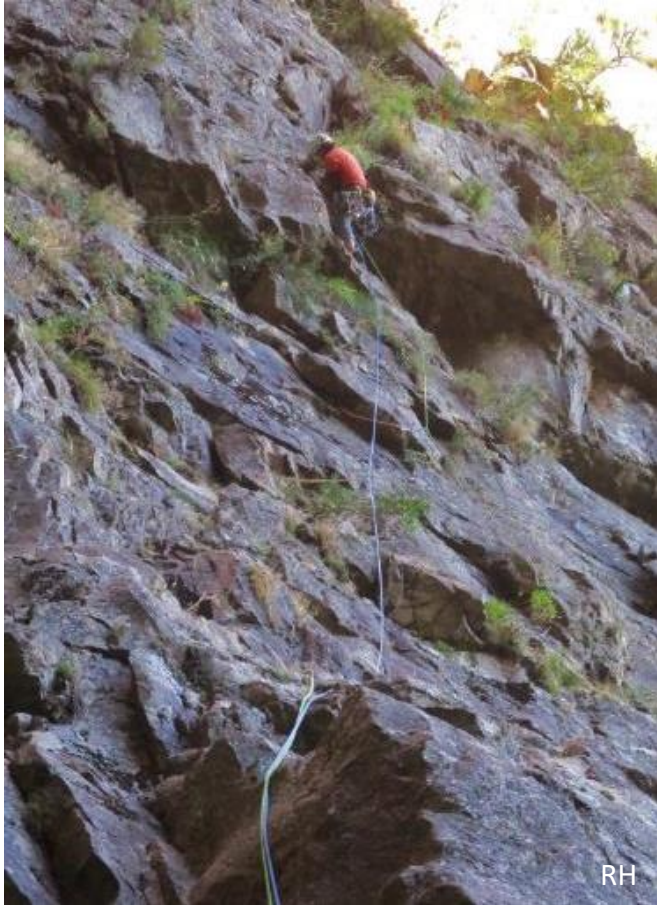
3. 30m (22) Step left and up orange rock to a vague corner. Steeply up and left into a bottomless open book. Follow cracks to exit right onto a ledge. Traverse a few meters right under a crack in the narrow roof to an easier looking break on the right.

4. 15m (18) Pull over the low roof into the left of two water run offs with gritty rock. At the ledge ~5m up, traverse right for several meters (there is gear in the vertical grooves – small cams and wires). On left side of ledge, pull up and left onto a slab with more vertical groove on the right. Straight up on flat edges to the left of main groove to reach the top roof. Pull up and right to a stance on the rim (#2 Camalot size crack and can be backed up on highline bolts ~7m to the left).

FA: Sam Nightingale and Richard Halsey (17 Mar 2021)

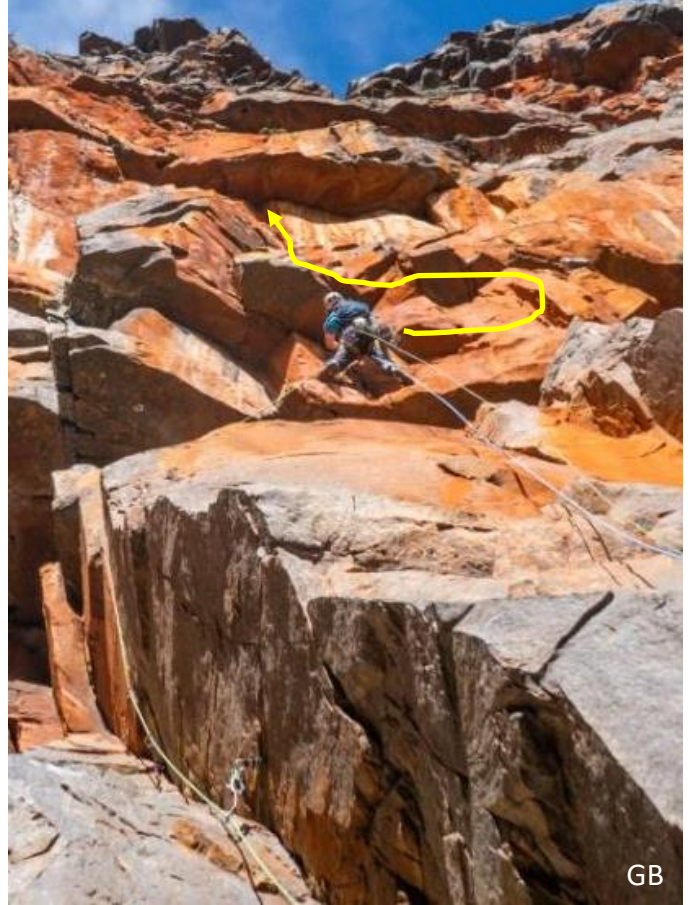
Notes: First pitch climbed clean on second but not on lead as of July 2021.

Meteor – pitch photos to help route finding



RH

Pitch 1 – aim for this beak in the lower roof



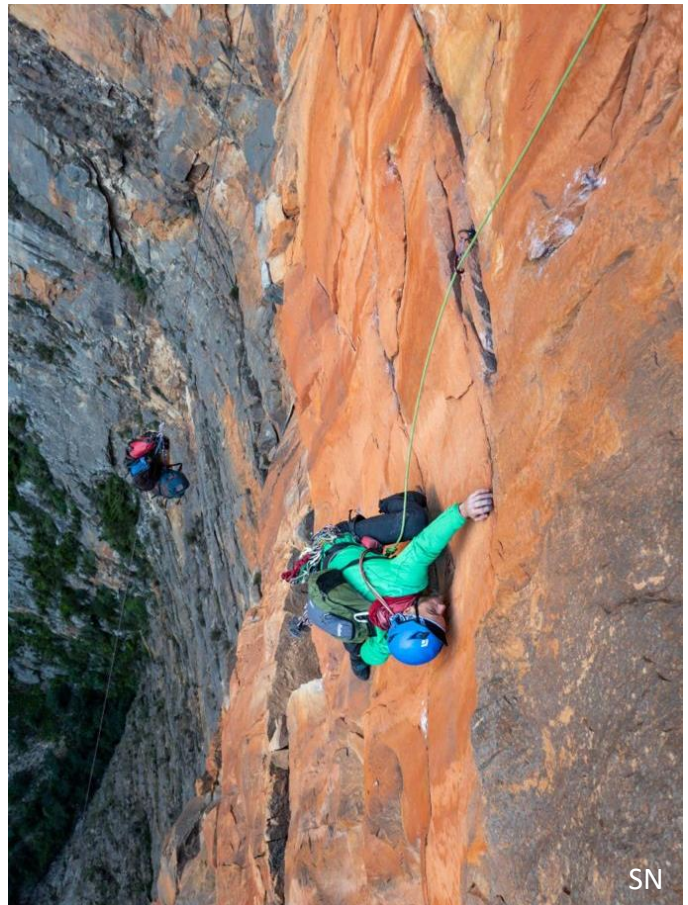
GB

Pitch 13 – mid meander



RH

Pitch 15 – tending left to exit point



SN

Pitch 12 – Bird on the rock, pigs in space.

A Private Universe (22 A1) **** 530m

(20, 12, 19, 17, 16, 21 A1, 19, 20, 20 A1, 22 A1, 22, 16, 22, 19, 18, 19, 22)

This was the first route on the imposing wall and remained the only one for over 14 years. As such it has been by far the most climbed route at Slanghoek to date and provides a grand adventure. Over the years the original RD has been adjusted and re-written by several parties to link pitches and reflect changes in aid requirement. These opinions were reviewed in compiling the updated RD below. The original topo is also included. Most of the stances are bolted, and there are plenty of lead bolts on the higher pitches

Subsequent to the first ascent, pitches 6 and 9 have been free climbed at grade 24 and 26 respectively, but most parties still aid them. As of August 2021, the steep crack on Pitch 10 has not been free climbed.

Start: At the large block leaning against the wall, below a grey, left facing recess that forms the side of a pillar.

- 1. 50m (20)** Clamber up to the top of the pillar. Head slightly right and up to the overhang, traverse a metre or so right to a break between the lower left section and higher right section of roof. Continue up and right for ~10m and then up to belay near the top of a recess.
- 2. 45m (12)** Continue up and then scramble far left to belay at a small tree at the base of an obvious flaky recess.
- 3. 25m (19)** Climb the delicate recess and then out right around an overhang and up to a bolted stance.
- 4. 25m (17)** Traverse out right then up an obvious break to reach a roof. Traverse back left under the roof and further left to a bolted stance.
- 5. 45m (16)** Head out left along the rising ledge system for ~15m and up into a small left facing corner. Pass an optional belay and continue on rocky ground to a stance at the right end of a ledge.
- 6. 25m (21 A1)** Head up to reach the huge razor flake. Gingerly climb and aid this (taking care of loose rock) to get to the roof. Traverse left to break through the overhang and up left to a bolted stance. A #4 Camalot is useful.
- 7. 25m (19)** Head up then follow the fault line as it leans right to a stance with 4 bolts.
- 8. 40m (20)** Head up and to the right under the *Moonshine Corner* pitch 7. Traverse spectacularly right on hard orange rock then up to a good sleeping ledge (bolts on either end). From the sleeping ledge clamber around to the left to gain a higher ledge system at the base of an overhanging recess.
- 9. 25m (20 A1)** From the left ledge, climb the faring recess mostly free on excellent rock, using bolts and micro nuts for aid where needed, to a bolted hanging stance on the right.
- 10. 25m (22 A1)** Climb directly up to the huge overhanging bulge and aid the wide crack - a #4 Camalot is useful. Climb spectacularly out and over easier vertical ground to a stance with 3 bolts.
- 11. 25m (22)** Head up to climb the improbable outward leaning orange face to the left. Gain the recess and get up to a handrail. Head spectacularly out left past 2 bolts and awkwardly get onto a ledge over and up to the left. Ascend a steep bulging crack (or slightly easier but run out face to right) to a bolted stance on tiny ledge. This pitch is usually aided as per original RD.

12. 20m (16) Climb up to a small ledge immediately above the belay. From here move right to a recess which leads up to a belay in the middle of the Long Ledge (possible bivy). Crawl ~ 15m left to a bolted stance for next pitch.

13. 35m (22) Follow bolts, then head up slightly left to easier ground, climbing past a 3 bolt rap anchor on a ledge. Climb up a recess on the left hand side of the pillar above, passing more bolts, to a single bolt stance on a large sloping ledge.

14. 15m (19) Move left and then up and right across the thin technical face to stance with 3 bolts.

15. 35m (18) Climb directly up to a thin flake taking care not to drop it onto the belay. Trend right and up through mixed ground to reach a bolted stance on a ledge.

16. 20m (19) Head into the recess above then out left onto the face. Head up and leftwards to gain a vertical crack. Continue up to a bolted stance on a small ledge.

17 (50m, 22) Head up the obvious V-shaped recess. When the recess steepens climb up and left on the orange face using underclings and laybacks, and through some small overhangs. Pull past a chockstone and back right into the steep recess. Head up through the bottomless offwidth/chimney to the top, then right to 3 bolts on the rim. A #4 Camelot is useful.

FA: David Davies, Hilton Davies and Matthew Sim (9 November 2002)

A Private Universe – Free Variation (26) ** 540m**

(20, 12, 19, 17, 16, 24, 19, 20, 26, 23, 22, 16, 22, 19, 18, 19, 22)

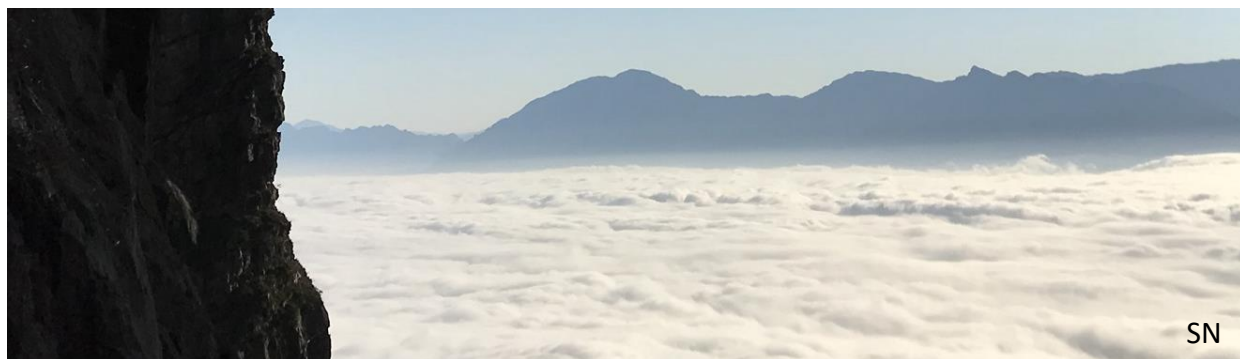
The first time the amphitheatre was free climbed was via *A Private Universe*, but with an alternate pitch to the wide, steep crack on Pitch 10. This alternate pitch (which is excellent) was also incorporated into *Meteor*. Only the differences to the original route (i.e. new and aid pitches which were free climbed) are in the description below.

6. 25m (24) As per original pitch.

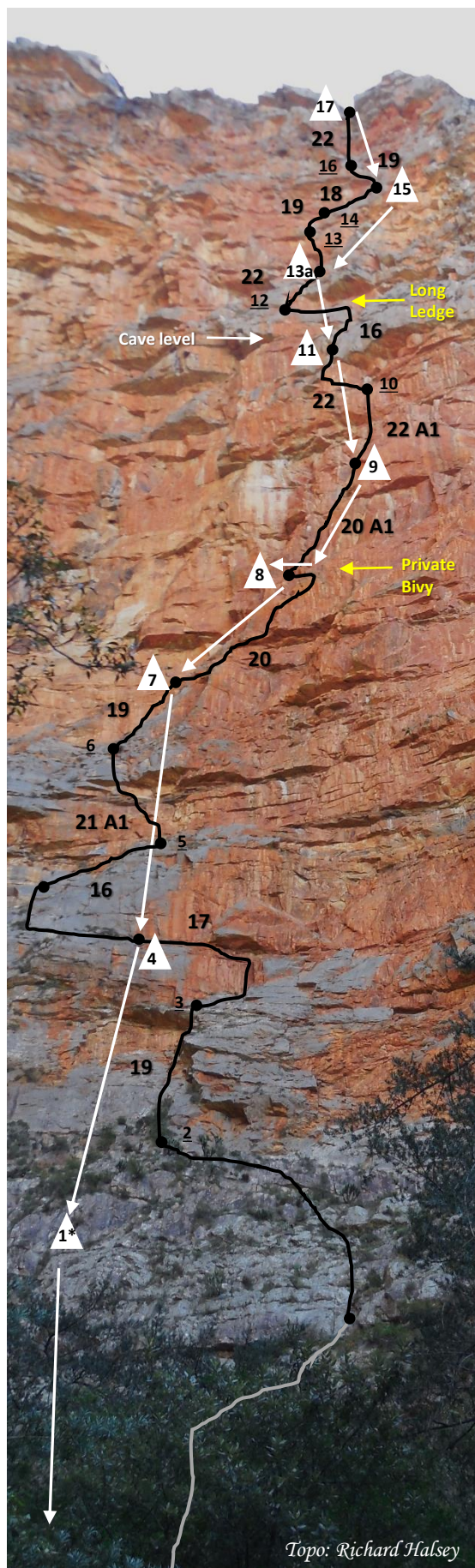
9. 35m (26) Climb to the left of the bolts until the roof, then traverse right under the steep, wide crack on *APU* to an airy perch with a rail for small to medium cams.

10. 15m (23) Start up a finger crack to the right of the perch stance and step back left to a prong above the belay. Navigate the steep recess to a rail under an overlap. Traverse left to the three-bolt anchor.

FA: Tinie Versfeld and Dave Birkett (date unknown)



A Private Universe (22 A1)



Recommended abseil route.

The recommend rap route for this side of the cliff essentially uses the best set of *APU* stances with one on *Moonshine Corner*, and all have ring hangers (some added in 2021). Full length, untrimmed 60m ropes are required. Suggested rap anchors are also marked on the *Moonshine Corner* and *Meteor* topo where it is easier to see to top section of route.

1: 17 ->15, Full 60m

Rap into space, once reconnect with wall low down, swing right ~5m to clip a bolt directional. Lower to anchor below at a full rope stretching 60m (have good knots in rope!). Anchor 16 has lower rings if you are worried that your ropes do not reach anchor 15.

2: 15 ->13a, 58m

Straight down to reach a large blocky ledge ~35m below. Continue to find a bolt directional on a lower sloping ledge. Carry on and scootch left to anchor at the end of a ledge.

3: 13a -> 11, ~40m

Straight down, passing three bolt anchor (stance 12 *APU*). Just below the two bolt anchor above a ledge on *Meteor* (stance 11), swing right ~6m to two bolts with rings on grey rock and a tiny perch. **DO NOT** go too low on this abseil! If you end up at anchor 10 on *Meteor* and try rap from there you will be stranded in space.

4: 11 -> 9, ~40m

Clip furthest right bolt on orange face, traverse right on foot ledge and place a directional to gain the steep crack (#2 to #4 Camalot size) below bolted anchor on *APU* (#3 and #2 Camalot in steep crack below.

5: 9 -> 8, ~40m

Steep – clip about 8 bolts including lowest bolt. Land on right bivy ledge. Traverse left to left bivy ledge to double ring anchor.

6: 8 -> 7, 25m?

Left leaning rap – need about 3 cam directionals to anchor with 4 bolts

7: 7 -> 4, Full 60m

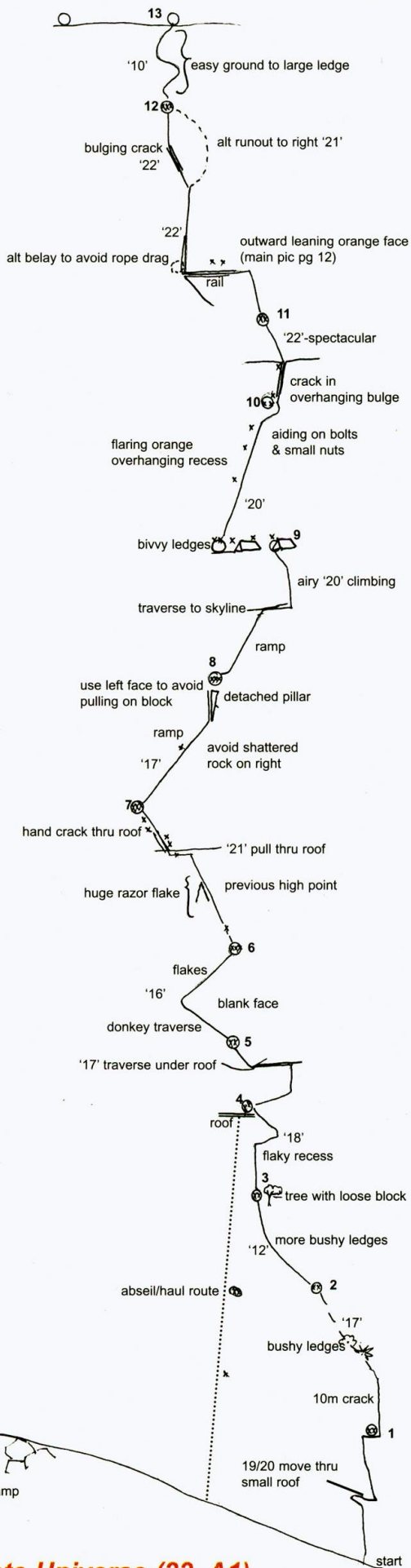
Straight down, no directional needed. Anchor above narrow ledge. Knots in rope!

8: 4 -> 1*, ~57m

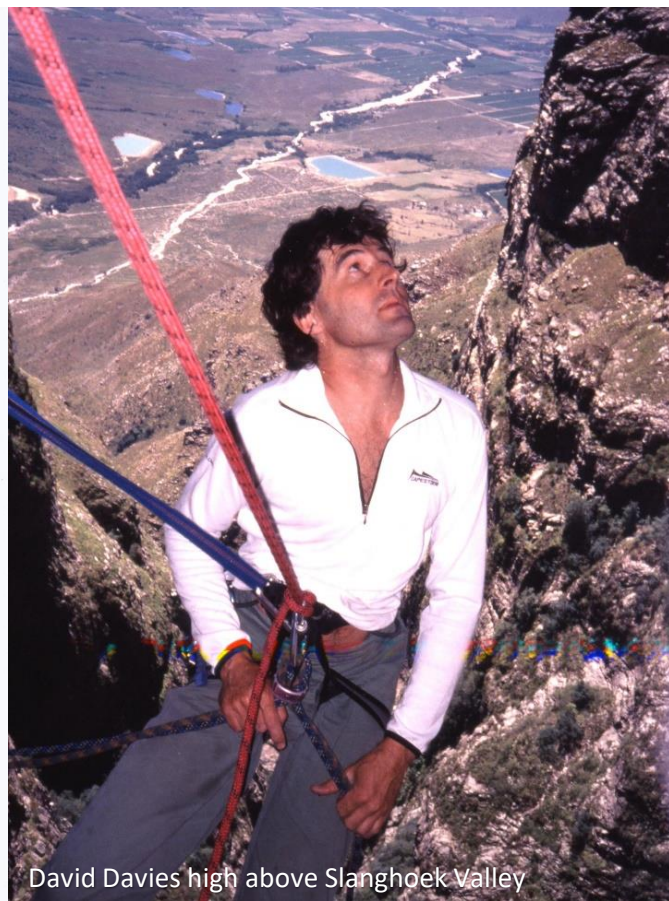
Straight down, no directionals. Bolts on grey face to left of broken corner.

9: 1* -> 0, 45m

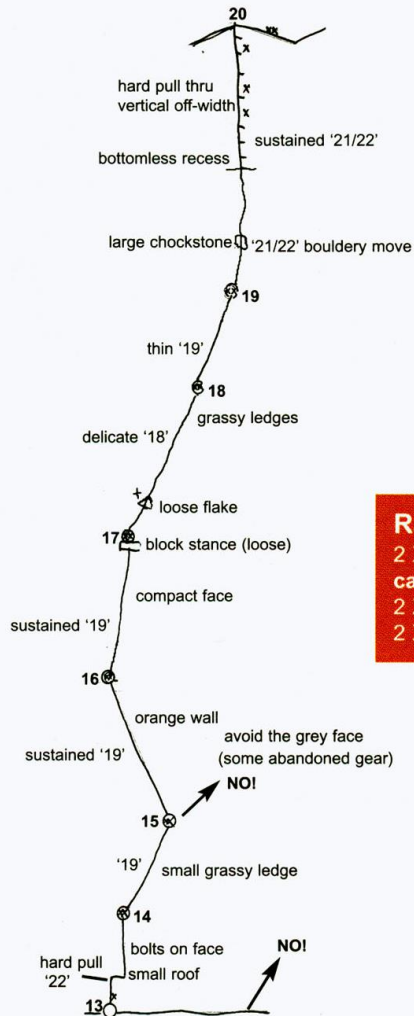
Straight down to terra firma



A Private Universe (22, A1)



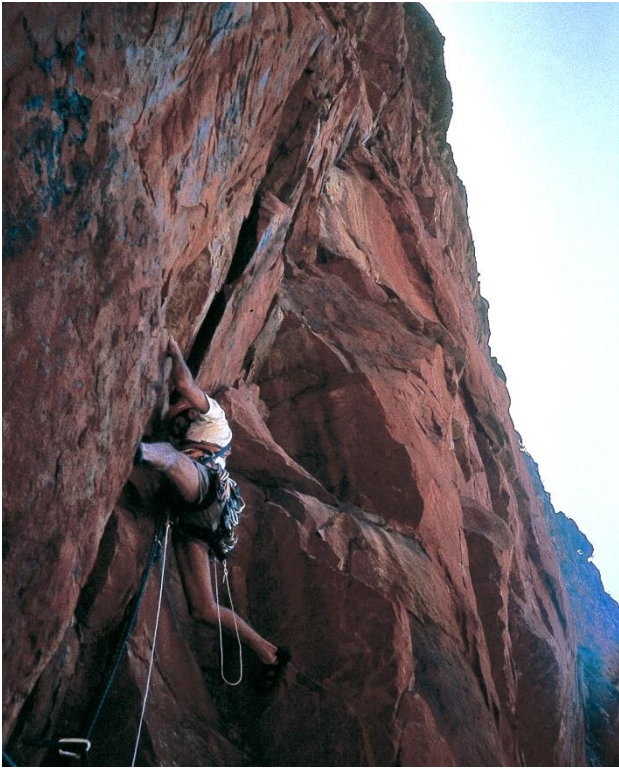
David Davies high above Slanghoek Valley



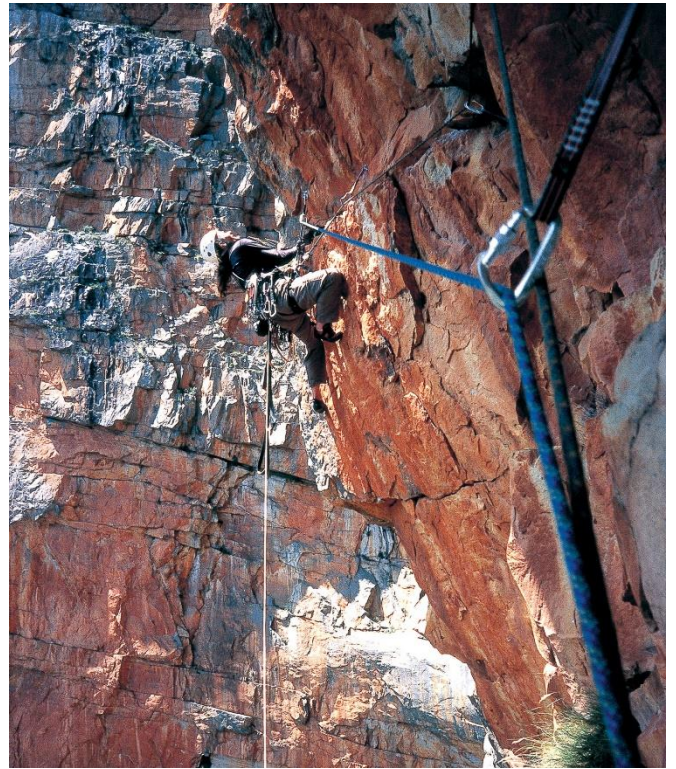
Rack

- 2 X sets of nuts
- cams to 3 inch
- 2 X #0 - #0.5 or small aliens
- 2 X finger - hand size

A Private Universe



Hilton Davies setting out from the Private Bivy



Matthew Sim on the third pitch above the bivy



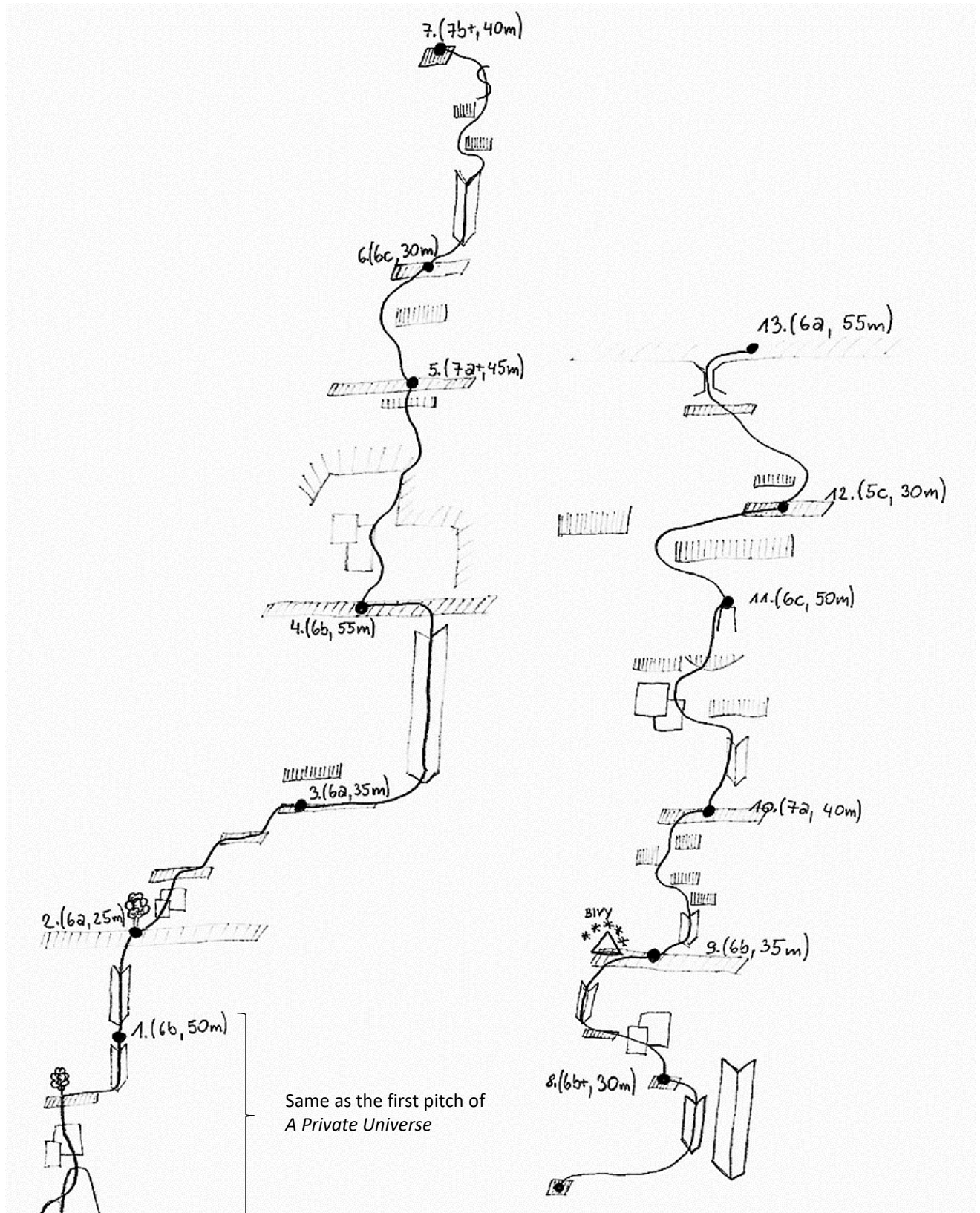
David Davies looking down the steep wide crack on pitch 10, Matthew belaying and Hilton spectating from the ledge

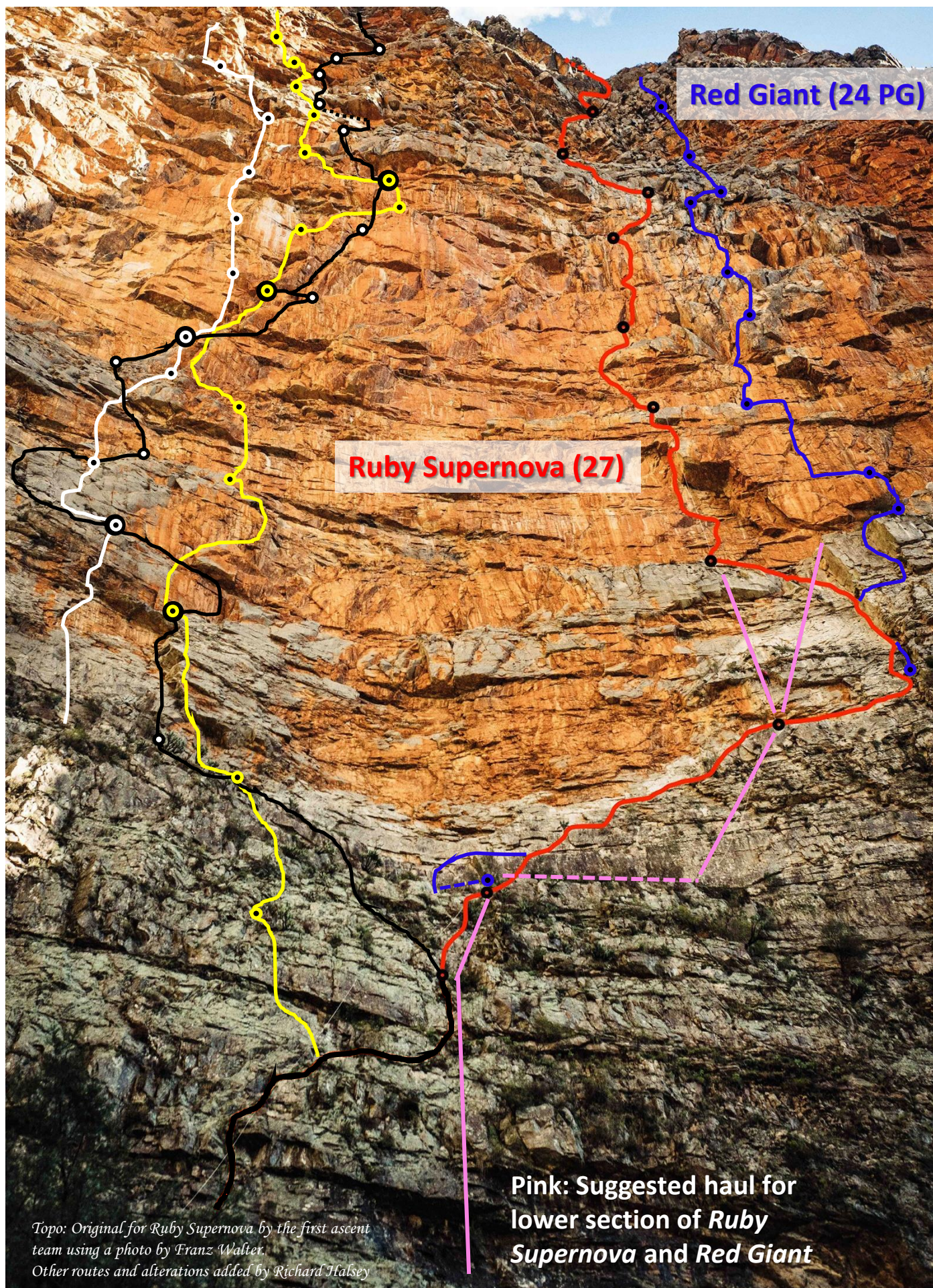
Ruby Supernova (27) **** 520m

(20, 18, 18, 20, 25, 22, 27, 21, 20, 24, 22, 17, 18)

Original topo below (with additions), no written RD at this stage

FA: Ines Papert (Germany), Joseph Pfnür (Germany), Luka Lindič (Slovenia) and Paul McSorley (Canada)
(15-16 June 2017)





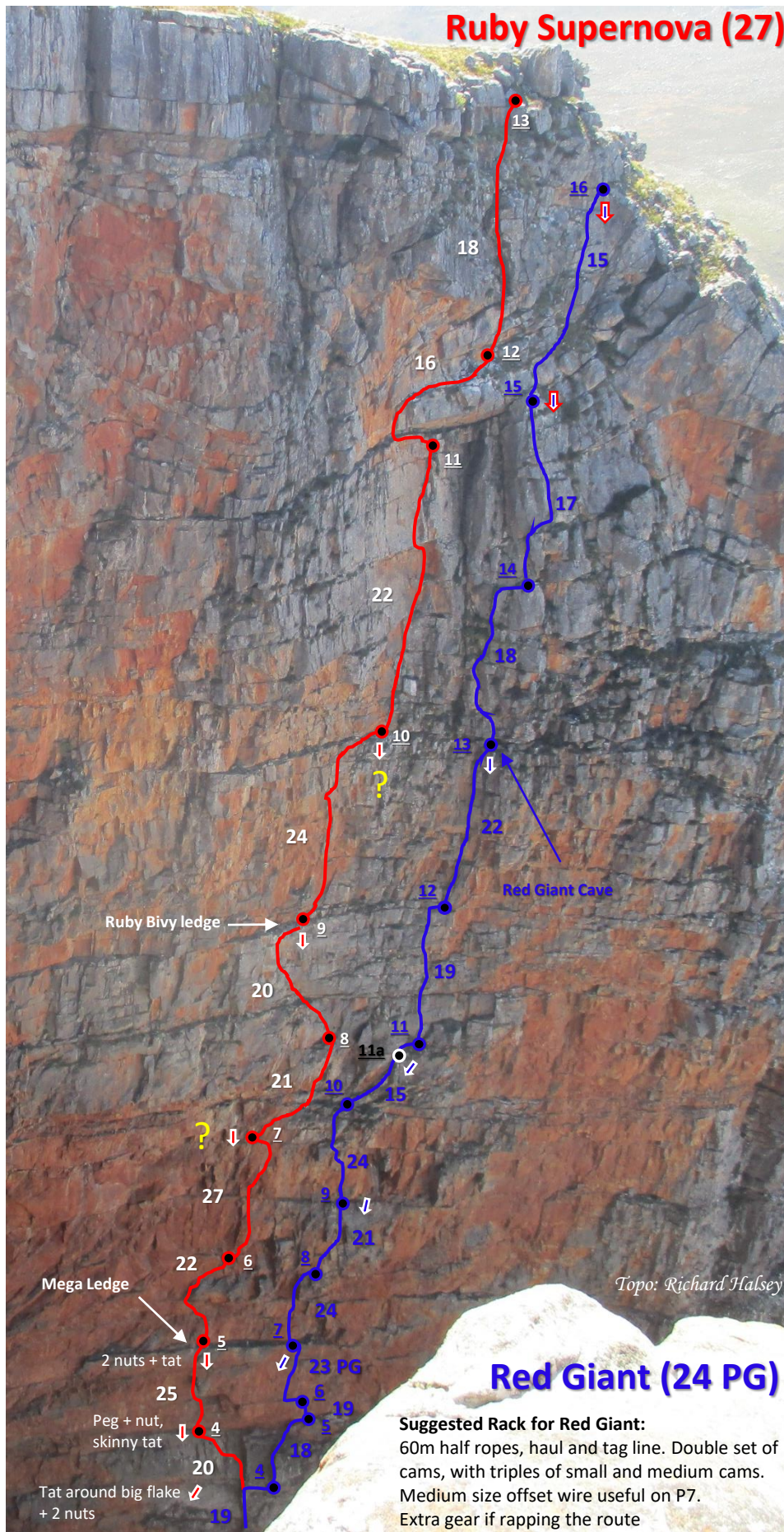
Red Giant (24 PG)

Ruby Supernova (27)

**Pink: Suggested haul for
lower section of *Ruby
Supernova* and *Red Giant***

*Topo: Original for Ruby Supernova by the first ascent
team using a photo by Franz Walter.
Other routes and alterations added by Richard Halsey*

Ruby Supernova (27)



Red Giant abseil and haul suggestion (60m ropes)

16 anchor: in situ
16 to 15: ~30m

15 anchor: in situ
15 to 13: ~55m

13 anchor: Cams: #3, #1, 0.5
(rail at back of cave).
13 – 11a: 60m

11a anchor:
Cams: 0.75, #1, medium wire.
(rail just past edge of grassy ledge).
11a to 9: ~50m

9 anchor: medium cams
(rail on ledge)
9 to 7: ~50m

To get to base from the Mega Ledge:

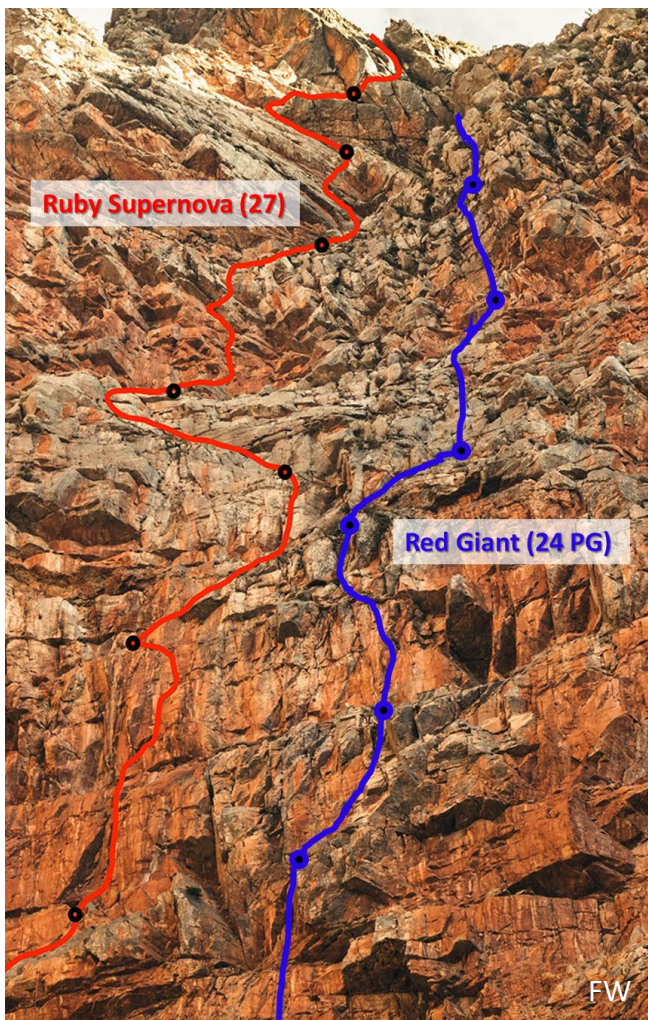
Use *Ruby* rap (back up where necessary!) although you can also go from *Red Giant* stance 7 (two large wires, #2 Camalot) to lower *Ruby* tat around a big flake in 60m. At the huge grassy ledge, walk right (facing out) to a tree with tat. One rap and scramble, or intermediate rap at block.

Red Giant (24 PG)

Suggested Rack for Red Giant:

60m half ropes, haul and tag line. Double set of cams, with triples of small and medium cams. Medium size offset wire useful on P7. Extra gear if rapping the route

Ruby Supernova



Top section of the right side of the amphitheatre



Ruby Supernova pitch 7 – Luka Lindič leading the crux



Seppi Pfnür leading into the steeps on pitch 5 of *Ruby Supernova*



At the Mega Ledge - second ascent of *Ruby Supernova* by Andrew Court, Jed Johnson and Teodor Iliev.

Red Giant (24 PG) 460m ****

(20, 18, 17, 19, 18, 19, 23, 24, 21, 24, 15, 19, 22, 18, 17, 15)

Tackles the right side of the amphitheatre, with excellent, sustained climbing on pitches 6 to 10 through the steep orange rock band. Pitch 7 gets a Parental Guidance (PG) advisory warning – it is not dangerously run out, but approach carefully and with a modicum of boldness. More-or-less shares the first 3 and half pitches of *Ruby* through the slabs.

Start: At the short pillar leaning against the face – shared with *APU*, *Ruby* and *Meteor*.

1. 50m (20) Up the leaning pillar and then continue slightly up and right to gain the narrow roof ~30m up. The break to aim for has a lower section of roof on the left (with a wide crack in its underside) and then a section on the right ~1m higher. At the lower roof section, rail right for ~1m – slightly grassy but can take a #4 Camelot. Pull back up and left to layback holds and pass the higher right-hand roof section on its left side. Head diagonally up and right to a ledge. Walk right to the base of vague left facing corner crack.

2. 25m (18) Head up the vague corner crack, then step right and up easy ground. Belay at a tree with tat against the short grey wall above.

3. 58m (17) Climb the face a few meters left of the tree (which has a left facing corner crack above it). Traverse right and then up two levels using some cracks and flakes. Continue traversing right all the way to below the base of the large left facing grey corner – easy but sketchy in places. Pop up to a small stance ~2m above the traverse level.

4. 20m (19) Climb the left facing corner until a horizontal break at a height where a traverse to the right meets the base of the next grey corner. Stance at the base of this second corner.

5. 17m (18) Up the corner to a wide ledge, then move right and diagonally up a boulder ramp for a few meters to stance below a right-facing corner and a rightward tending break.

6. 10m (19) Climb the break for 5 m and exit left onto the narrow rail/ ledge. A hanging stance ~1m left of the right end of the ledge is advised due to nature of the next pitch.

7. 20m (23 PG) The Gangplank. Traverse left along the ledge until it narrows at a point directly below a break in the narrow roof ~15m up. Get good gear in the rail at foot high. Climb confidently up to a tiny left facing corner type feature (where there is #9 DMM Offset Alloy Nut or equivalent). Up to a fin and vertical microcam slot. Pull left on good holds and up to gain more sidepulls (and good gear). Weave up the steep face to the roof and step right to the break. Pull through and step left. Finish delicately up the big flake (there is a crack to the left for a medium cam) to the awesome sleeping ledge.

8. 30m (24) The Space Boogy. Start up a series of laybacks that tend up and right to a horizontal break. Continue strenuously up the vertical cracks and sidepulls and step left to a tiny ledge. Move back right into the corner (green alien or equivalent/small offset wires). Pull up to a fragile down pointing flake ~70cm long (do not place gear behind it!). Behind this flake, and almost obscured by it, is a cunning pod in solid rock for a medium cam. Boogy up the excellent face, pulling out right to the arete for the final moves. Up and right to a stance on a small platform.

9. 20m (21) Head up and right (slightly run out) to gain the base of the wide tube type feature that provides a bit of a puzzle. Exit to the ledge and up to a stance on a narrow ledge.

10. 30m (24) The Stargasm. Demanding, strenuous and outstanding. Start confidently up a series of steep cracks and laybacks to a vague recess. Pull up and left via tricky moves to a hand rail. Traverse left over the void for ~2m, and then some big gymnastic moves up and left to gain a small ledge. Finish up the steep recess to a good ledge. Stiff for the grade.

11. 15m (15) Ramble easily diagonally right along the break to one little boulder move. Continue up and stop at a rail at the left end of the higher grassy ledge (this is a much better place to haul from than on the ledge itself). After hauling, move a few meters right to the base of a wide crack.

12. 35m (19) Scramble up right of the wide crack and step back left (do not be tempted by the easy looking, blocky terrain to the right). Punchy start up the grey face aiming for a patch of orange rock ~8m up. Head slightly left, then straight, and by the top of the pitch traverse slightly right to a small platform, just down and left from some steep fins.

13. 35m (22) Start up the steep fins and then up to the wide crack above that breaks through and overhanging wall. Continue straight up more steep cracks and into the Red Giant Cave.

14. 32m (18) Pull through the roof of cave and then tend left to a slight groove. From the top of this, follow a series wide vertical crack and blocks until you can turn right onto a sloping ledge at the base of a slightly brown corner.

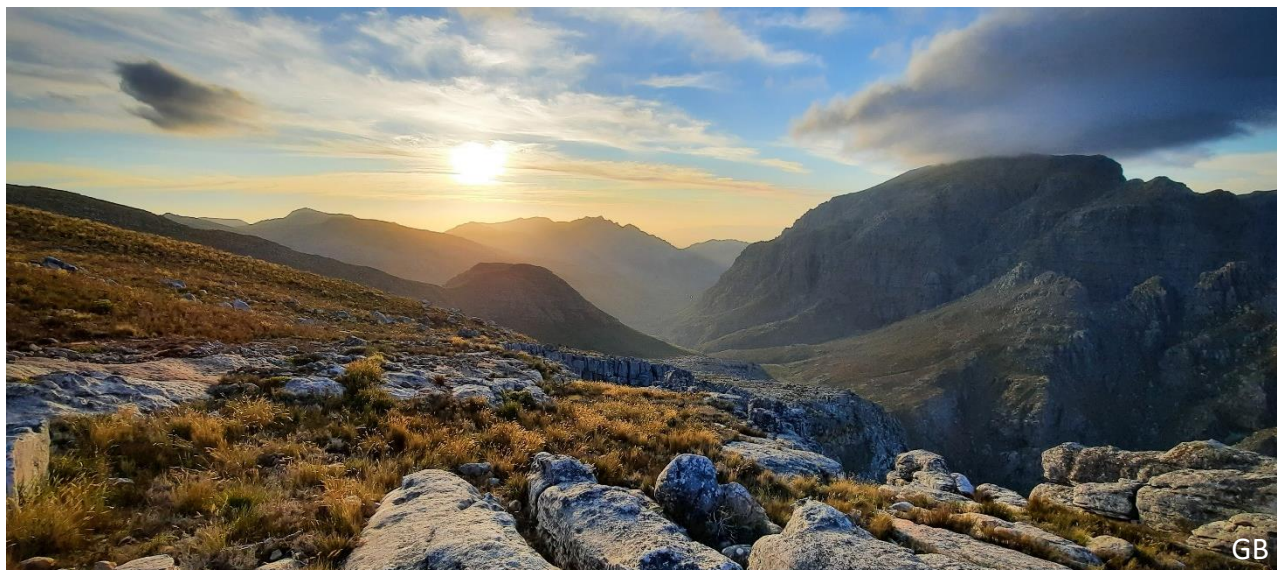
15. 30m (17) Up the cracks to a roof, followed by a short rising traverse to the right. Above is a shallow corner, but take the next recess to the right. Continue up the ramp to the tat stance.

16. 30m (15) Take the most direct line up to the visible anchor up and right, that uses the best rock.

FA: Richard Halsey and Garreth Bird (October 2020)

Gear: No bolts or pegs. Suggested rack on the topo.

Notes: It should be possible to combine P6 and P7, which would reduce potential fall factor on P7, but could produce rope drag. If you walk in and haul the bottom pitches, then the following seems the best approach: At the end of pitch 2, walk the bags as far as possible to the right along the grass ledge and leave them there. Mid way through P3 (at the Ruby stance on their P3) haul the bags and leave them there. At the end of *Red Giant* pitch 5, move to the far left of the ledge and haul the bags from there (or traverse further left to *Ruby* P4 anchor, haul and leave them there).



Red Giant



Pitch 7 – Nearing the Mega Ledge



Pitch 8 – Doing the Space Boogy



Pitch 7 – Venturing out on The Gangplank



Pitch 13 – Below the Red Giant Cave

Horizontal amongst the vertical



Portaledge belay stance below the crux on *Moonshine Corner*



Gear sort in the Red Giant Cave after rain



Coffee refueling on Moonshine Ledge